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ABSTRACT

This research brief reviews and analyzes national data on college going, persistence, and graduation. It compares characteristics of students who enter college immediately after high school graduation with other types of postsecondary entrants, considers traditional versus nontraditional paths of college going, and examines college persisters and leavers. Data are analyzed by socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and ability quartile. Data highlights include: (1) the majority of 1980 high school graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education did not enter in the traditional pattern; (2) 1980 high school seniors of high ability but low socioeconomic means were not as likely to attain a bachelor's degree as were their counterparts from higher income families; (3) African Americans and Hispanics were less likely to persist for 4 years in college or to earn a bachelor's degree; and (4) half of the 1980 high school graduates who started college on track "stopped out" of college at some point in their educational experience. Statewide retention data for Tennessee are analyzed to identify similarities between national-level and state-level data. Three brief institutional case studies illustrate elements of successful retention programs. Implications of the data are examined, focusing on improving access and retention for minorities, low-income, and nontraditional students. (Contains 16 references.) (JDD)

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Division of Policy Analysis and Research
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Division of Policy Analysis and Research
American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.

College Going, Persistence, and Completion Patterns in Higher Education: What Do We Know?

Cecilia Ottinger

Upcoming demographic changes and increased legislative interest have made it essential for higher education administrators to focus on new trends in the persistence and completion patterns of college students. The first key issue faced by postsecondary institutions is that the pool of traditional college-age youth (18-to-24 year olds) is changing. The total number of 18-to-24 year olds will hold steady between 1990 and 2025, but there will be significant changes in the composition of racial and ethnic groups within this population. During this period, the number of white college-age youth will decrease 18 percent, while that of minority youths is projected to grow by 42 percent. Historically, white 18-to-24 year olds have been the most likely cohort to begin and complete college education, however, by 2025, minorities are expected to comprise 40 percent of all college-age youth. These trends indicate that higher education will have to exert greater effort to increase the college attendance, and successful graduation of different types of students.

Secondly, colleges and universities are being held more accountable by various levels of government. One in two undergraduates now receives financial aid to attend college. State and federal legislators want to know the outcomes for these students, particularly now when governments are experiencing budget problems which create more competition for funds. Taxpayers want to see how their tax dollars contribute to the next generation of educated persons. Many state legislators see links between the level of taxpayer support for public education and the prospects of long-term economic prosperity for the state. Together, these and other concerns indicate the need to focus on what we know about college entry and persistence in our college and universities.

This research brief reviews and analyzes national data on college going, persistence and graduation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The majority of 1980 high school graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education did not enter in the traditional pattern.
- Who attains a degree is influenced not only by intellectual ability but also by socioeconomic status. 1980 high school seniors of high ability but low socioeconomic means were not as likely to attain a bachelor's degree as are their counterparts from higher income families.
- African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to enter college on the nontraditional path, and they disproportionately enroll in two-year and less than two-year institutions. African Americans and low-income students are the most "at-risk" in terms of dropping out of college.
- African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to persist for four years in college or to earn a bachelor's degrees.

Overall, students are taking longer to attain bachelor's degrees.

- Half of the 1980 high school graduates who started college on track "stopped out" of college at some point in their educational experience.

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IMPLICATIONS

- College persistence rates and bachelor's degree attainment rates are lower for African Americans and Hispanics. If colleges hope to improve the retention and graduation rates of those students, better programs should be developed to address the academic and environmental barriers these groups face.
- Improved mechanisms should be developed for increasing access and retention for minorities and low-income students.
- Further research should address the issue of why relatively few students of high ability and low-income are persisting and graduating from college.
- Better cooperation should be developed between two- and four-year institutions to increase the number of community college students who successfully transfer and attain bachelor's degrees.
- More programs should be developed to increase the completion rates of students who enter college on the nontraditional path.

INTRODUCTION

Because students follow diverse paths to the completion of study, a variety of issues must be considered in examining their goals.

The key questions guiding this inquiry are:

- Who enrolls in college after high school graduation?
- How soon after high school graduation do students enroll in postsecondary education?
- What are the characteristics of students who enter college on a "traditional path" and of those who enter on a "nontraditional path"?
- Who persists?
- Who stops out or drops out of college?
- How many earn an associate's or bachelor's degree in 5 1/2 years?
- Which types of programs are most successful in retaining and graduating students?

Table 1

Percent of 1980 High School Graduates Who Entered Postsecondary Institutions by February 1986, by Socioeconomic Status[a]

	Total	Low-SES	2nd Quartile	3rd Quartile	High-SES
Total	**67%**	**52%**	**62%**	**74%**	**89%**
Race/Ethnicity					
Hispanic	59%	53%	71%	70%	91%
American Indian	60	56	31	81	88
Asian	90	75	96	87	97
African American	64	60	66	75	85
White	69	48	61	74	89
Ability Quartile[b]					
Low-Quartile	45%	42%	40%	48%	66%
2nd Quartile	62	50	57	70	80
3rd Quartile	78	65	71	83	91
High-Quartile	92	78	90	90	97

a Socioeconomic status quartiles are determined by a composite score based on parental education, family income, father's occupation and household characteristics in 1980.

b Ability quartiles were measured by performance on a test administered as part of the High School and Beyond survey in 1980.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Plans, Participation, Persistence, and Baccalaureate Degree Attainment of 1980 High School Graduates, by Socioeconomic Status*. Unpublished data tabulations, February 1989.

Where possible, analysis by race/ethnicity, sex, socioeconomic status and academic ability are included. Several case studies of institutional retention programs are highlighted to illustrate strategies developed for those students who are most "at-risk" of leaving college before completion. In addition, a review of longitudinal retention data from Tennessee is presented.

This report is based primarily on longitudinal data from the U.S. Department of Education's 1980 High School and Beyond Survey (HS&B). HS&B[1] has monitored the patterns of college going and educational attainment among a national sample of 1980 high school graduates.

The data used in this report are based on published High School and Beyond reports and from special data tabulations on the socioeconomic status and academic ability of students. The data in this research brief use special definitions that are specific to this data set and offer a distinctive approach to how issues of college entry, persistence, and graduation are discussed.

The following are the key terms used in this report:

KEY TERMS

1) **Immediate college-entrants** are those 1980 high school graduates who entered any type of postsecondary institution by October 1980.

2) **Traditional-path** college entrants are those 1980 high school graduates who entered a four-year institution on a full-time basis by October 1980.

3) **Nontraditional-path** entrants are those 1980 high school graduates who entered less than four-year institutions or attended college part-time, or delayed entering college or transferred into a four-year institution.

4) **Persisters** are those 1980 high school graduates who entered a four-year institution on a traditional path and were continuously enrolled for four years (i.e. through academic year 1983-84) but had not completed a bachelor's degree by May 1984.

5) **Stopouts** are 1980 high school graduates who entered college on the traditional path and left college for at least one semester but had returned by May 1986.

6) **Dropouts** are the 1980 high school graduates who entered college on the traditional path, left college and had not returned by May 1986.

Who Enrolls in College?

Much research has found that students who enter college immediately after high school graduation are the most likely to persist to attain degrees. The HS&B 1980 survey data base documents this but also allows us to compare the characteristics of these students to other types of postsecondary entrants.

Table 2

Percent of 1980 High School Graduates Who Entered Any Postsecondary Institution Immediately After Graduation[a]

	Percent of 1980 High School Graduates
Total	**48.2%**
Male	44.9
Female	51.3
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanics	39.0%
American Indian	34.6
Asian	75.5
African American	41.7
White	49.9
Ability[b]	
Low ability	23.0%
2nd quartile	41.1
3rd quartile	60.7
High ability	77.7
Socioeconomic Status[c]	
Low-SES	31.5%
2nd quartile	42.5
3rd quartile	54.9
High-SES	72.6

a Immediately—1980 High School Graduates who entered any postsecondary institution by October 1980.

b Ability quartiles were measured by performance on a test administered as part of the High School and Beyond survey in 1980.

c Socioeconomic status quartiles are a composite score on parental education, family income father's occupation and household characteristics in 1980.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Plans, Participation, Persistence, and Baccalaureate Degree Attainment of 1980 High School Graduates, by Socioeconomic Status.* Unpublished data tabulations, February 1989.

Enrollment Patterns

- Two-thirds of 1980 high school graduates (67 percent) attempted some type of postsecondary education within six years of high school graduation (i.e., by May 1986) (table 1).

- Education participation rates are affected greatly by family income. Almost half of the 1980 high school graduates from the lowest SES background never enrolled in postsecondary education (NCES, 1989b). In contrast, 89 percent of students from high-SES backgrounds had enrolled in college by 1986.

Timing of College Entry

The majority (52 percent) of 1980 high school graduates did not pursue any type of postsecondary education immediately after high school.

- Slightly less than half of 1980 high school graduates (48 percent) entered postsecondary institutions immediately after high school (table 2).

- Women high school graduates were somewhat more likely than men to enter postsecondary institutions immediately (51 percent vs. 45 percent).

The pattern of immediate postsecondary entry also varied by race/ethnicity:

- Among 1980 high school graduates, Asians were the most likely group to enter college immediately after high school graduation (76 percent).

However, with the exception of Asians, minorities in the 1980 graduating class were less likely than whites to enter postsecondary education immediately after high school graduation.

- Forty-two percent of African American high school graduates entered college immediately, as did 39 percent of Hispanics and 34 percent of Native Americans; in comparison, 50 percent of whites exhibited this pattern.

Academic ability and socioeconomic status also influence the timing of college entry. The higher the socioeconomic status and academic ability the greater the likelihood of immediate postsecondary entry (table 2).

- Eighty-five percent of 1980 graduates of both high ability and high socioeconomic status attended college immediately, compared to 78 percent of high-ability youth from low-income families (NCES, 1989b).

College Going: Traditional Path vs. Non-Traditional Path

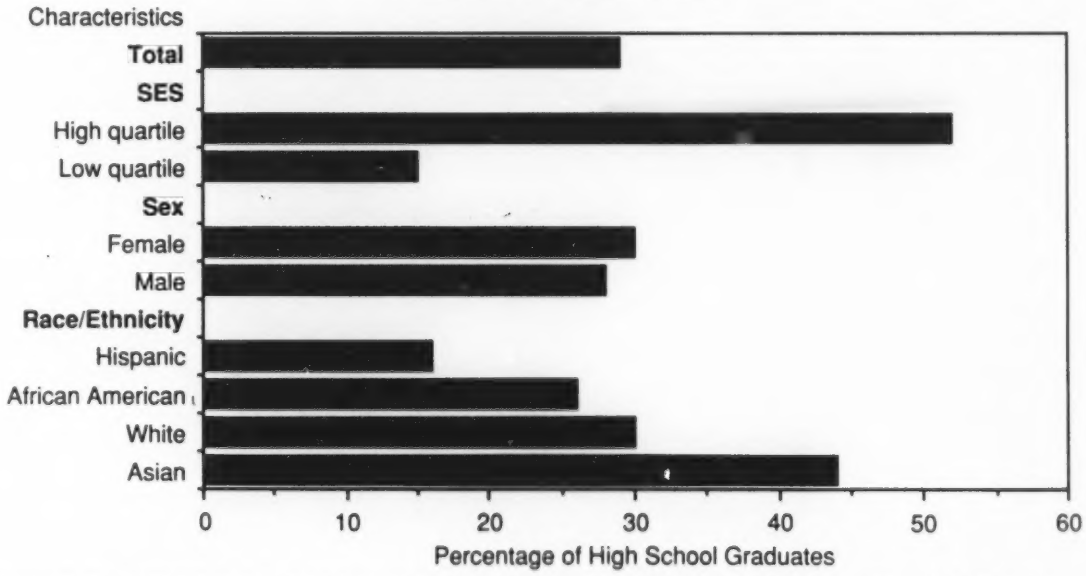
The traditional perception of college attendance is that students enter a four-year college in the fall immediately after high school graduation, study full-time for four consecutive years, and then graduate. Other patterns of study — especially initial enrollment at a two-year college — are now acceptable and common but, as the HS&B study demonstrates, students who follow a nontraditional path are put at some disadvantage.

Yet, as is evident from the HS&B data, the majority of 1980 high school graduates did *not* fit the traditional pattern.

- Less than three out of ten 1980 high school graduates (29 percent) attended college in the traditional way, as defined here (figure 1).

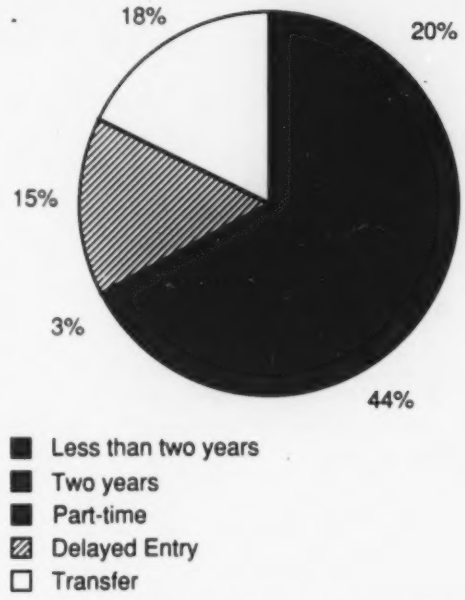
Figure 1

Traditional College Attendance Rates by 1980 High School Graduates, Selected Characteristics



Source: C. Dennis Carroll, *College Persistence and Degree Attainment for 1980 High School Graduates: Hazards for Transfers, Stopouts and Part-timers.* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1989), p. 7.

Figure 2
Nontraditional College Attendance of 1980 High School Graduates



Source: C. Dennis Carroll, *College Persistence and Degree Attainment for 1980 High School Graduates: Hazards for Transfers, Stopouts and Part-timers.* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1989), p. 9.

- In comparison, 38 percent of 1980 high school graduates started college in a nontraditional manner. These students either entered two-year or less-than-two-year institutions or entered college after October 1980 (figure 2).

— More than 4 out of 10 of these students attended two-year institutions (44 percent);

— Another 18 percent transferred into four-year institutions;

— 15 percent delayed entry into college;

— 20 percent attended less than two-year institutions; and

— Another 3 percent attended college part-time.

- One-third of 1980 high school graduates had not enrolled in college by 1986 (i.e., had never attempted formal study for a postsecondary degree or certificate).

Generally, White and Asian 1980 high school graduates were more likely than others to start college on the traditional path.

- For example, 44 percent of Asian 1980 high school graduates and 30 percent of whites 1980 high graduates attended college on the traditional path; in comparison 26 percent of African Americans and 16 percent of Hispanics did so (figure 1).

- However this does not always hold true. For example, African Americans at independent institutions were equally as likely as whites to have started on the traditional path (73 percent, for both) (Porter, 1989).

Not surprisingly, the SES of a student's family appears to affect the type of college entry.

- Among 1980 high school graduates only 15 percent of low-SES students entered college in the traditional pattern in contrast to 52 percent of those from families in the high socioeconomic status (figure 1).

- Among those who began their college career on the nontraditional path, Hispanics were more likely than other ethnic groups to enter a two-year institution (53 percent). In comparison, 43 percent of whites entered two-year institutions, as did 42 percent of African Americans.

- Of all students who entered two-year institutions, those from low-SES backgrounds represented a larger proportion than those with high-SES backgrounds (46 percent and 37 percent, respectively) (Carroll, 1989).

- African Americans were the most likely racial/ethnic group to attend a less than 2-year institution (27 percent) while Asians were the least likely (7 percent).

Who Will Persist and Who Will Leave The Traditional Path?

PERSISTERS

Persisters are those 1980 high school graduates who 1) entered college on the traditional path (i.e. immediately after high school graduation, in a four-year institution on a full-time basis); 2) were continuously enrolled through May 1984 and 3) had not completed a bachelor's degree as of May 1984.

This categorization offers a measure of how many students maintain continuous enrollment, in the traditional pattern of college study. Many of these students will complete their degree study, as documented by the 1986 *HS&B* follow-up.

- More than half (54 percent) of 1980 high school graduates who entered on the traditional path were persisters (Carroll, 1989).

PERSISTENCE VARIED BY RACE/ETHNICITY

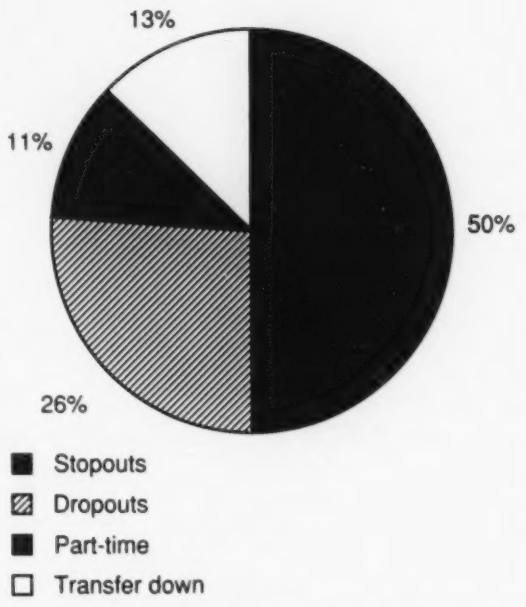
- Asians who started college on the traditional path persisted at a slightly higher rate than whites (61 percent vs. 56 percent).

- Both African American and Hispanic students who started on the traditional path were somewhat less likely to persist than whites (44 percent and 42 percent, respectively).

- Persistence also varied by socioeconomic status. Sixty percent of high-SES 1980 high school graduates who started on the traditional path persisted four years. In comparison, only 42 percent of low-SES persisters followed this pattern.

- The higher the level of ability and SES the more likely students were to persist. For example, 65 percent of high ability and high-SES 1980 graduates persisted through academic year 1983-84. In comparison, 51 percent of those of high ability and low-SES persisted through academic year 1983-84 (NCES, 1989b).

Figure 3
Pattern of Traditional Path Leavers



Source: C. Dennis Carroll, *College Persistence and Degree Attainment for 1980 High School Graduates: Hazards for Transfers, Stopouts and Part-timers.* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1989), p. 14.

- However, African American students of high ability were *much less* likely to persist than their white counterparts (38 percent vs. 63 percent respectively).

STOPOUTS

Half of the 1980 high school graduates who started college on the traditional path "stopped out" of college at some point in their educational experience but had returned by 1986 (figure 3).

- Males were somewhat more likely to stopout than females (53 percent vs. 48 percent).

DROPOUTS

"Dropouts" for purposes of this study are students who enrolled in college on the traditional path but left college and had not returned by February 1986.

- More than one-quarter of 1980 high school graduates who entered college on the traditional path dropped out (26 percent) (Carroll, 1989).

There is a considerable amount of literature that attempts to predict which students will drop out. Students drop out for a number of reasons including academic, personal and financial factors. Factors such as race and socioeconomic status have also been associated with dropping out of college (Clewell and Ficklen, 1986). These same patterns were evident for 1980 high school graduates.

- African American students were more likely to dropout than any other racial group. For example, 33 percent of African American 1980 high school graduates who started college on the traditional path had dropped out by 1986, compared to the 18 percent of Asians who did so.

- Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds dropped out at a far greater rate than those from high socioeconomic families (44 percent vs. 14 percent).

Degree Attainment

Given the variety of college going patterns exhibited by 1980 high school graduates, a key concern is how many of these students who entered postsecondary institutions completed a bachelor's degree. However, it should be noted that not all students who entered college were aiming for a four-year degree.

- Overall, less than one out of five of all 1980 high school graduates had attained a bachelor's degree by 1986 (19 percent).

- More than half of 1980 high school graduates who entered college in the traditional pattern earned a bachelor's degree by 1986 (53 percent) (Carroll, 1989).

- Overall, only 9 percent of 1980 high school graduates who entered college on the nontraditional path earned bachelor's degrees.

- Persisters — those who started college immediately and maintained continuous enrollment — were the most likely group to earn bachelor's degrees by 1986. Among those 1980 high school graduates who persisted, 74 percent attained bachelor's degrees by May 1986.

Degree attainment also varied by race/ethnicity, ability and socioeconomic factors.

- About one-third of African Americans and Hispanics who started on the traditional path had attained bachelor's degrees by 1986 (33 percent and 31 percent, respectively).

- Forty-four percent of African American 1980 high school graduates of high-SES background who entered college in the traditional pattern earned a bachelor's degree compared to 28 percent of those from low-SES backgrounds who entered in the traditional manner. (NCES, 1989b)

- Whites who started college in a nontraditional pattern were more likely to attain bachelor's degrees than African Americans or Hispanics who started college on the nontraditional path (10 percent vs. 5 percent and 4 percent, respectively) (Carroll, 1989).

Among all 1980 high school graduates, those from high-SES backgrounds earned bachelor's degree at a far greater extent than those from low-SES families.

- Many bright students did not complete college for reasons related to family income. While 66 percent of high-SES, high ability students who entered on the traditional path attained degrees by 1986, only 44 percent of their high ability, low-SES counterparts, did so. (NCES, 1989b)

- Among 1980 high school graduates who started college on the nontraditional path, those from high SES backgrounds were more likely to attain a bachelor's degree than were low-SES graduates (19 percent vs. 4 percent).

The likelihood of attaining a bachelor's degree also depended on the characteristics of students' college going experiences.

- Thirty-nine percent of stopouts earned bachelor's degrees by 1986. (Carroll, 1989).

- Only 34 percent of those who shifted from full-time to part-time study earned bachelor's degrees by 1986.

- The least likely groups to attain a bachelor's degree were students who attended two-year or less-than two-year institutions. Many of them, it must be acknowledged, never intended to work toward a bachelor's degree.

PROFILE OF TWO-YEAR COLLEGE ENTRANTS

- Overall, 25 percent of 1980 high school graduates had entered a two-year public institution by 1986 (NCES, 1989b).

- Thirteen percent of 1980 high school graduates entered public two-year institutions immediately after high school graduation.

- According to Grubb (1991) 20 percent of 1980 high school graduates who entered two-year institutions transferred to four-year institutions within four years.

— African Americans were the least likely group to transfer (10 percent) while 22 percent of whites and 16 percent of Hispanics did so.

- By 1986, 15 percent of those who entered two-year public institutions had attained a bachelor's degree.

- Among those who entered two-year public colleges immediately after high school graduation, 38 percent had attained an associate's degree or certificate by 1986.

- Overall, 7 percent of all 1980 high school graduates had attained an associate's degree by 1986.

SUMMARY

The national data from the *High School and Beyond* study indicate several key factors about who is most likely to finish college in 5 1/2 years, who is least likely to attend in a traditional pattern, who persists and who drops out of college. Generally, the results show that:

- Students who enter college in the traditional pattern are more likely to persist and earn a degree. However, the majority of 1980 high school graduates did not attend college in this fashion.
- African Americans and Hispanics have lower rates of completion and higher rates of dropping out than do Asians and whites. Both the former groups are likely to enter college in the nontraditional fashion.
- Socioeconomic status still affects persistence even when ability is taken into account.

Below is a summary of retention data for the state of Tennesse, which shows that "some of" the same patterns of the college experience are found on the state level.

STATEWIDE RETENTION DATA: TENNESSEE

In 1984, Tennessee enacted its Education Reform Act. A component of this legislation established a goal of "an increase in the percentage of students who enter a four-year university degree program and subsequently earn baccalaureate degrees." As a result of this goal the state tracks the traditional student, which is defined as a first-time full-time student registered for 12 credits or more, entering in the fall term. These students are reviewed at two, three, four, five and six year intervals to determine if they have completed their goals. Findings for the 1984 freshmen class include:

- The majority of the 1984 freshmen took more than 4 years to complete their college education from the admitting institutions.
- Twelve percent of 1984 freshmen class graduated with a bachelor's degree within four years.
- Eighteen percent of the 1984 class earned a college degree in five years and 8 percent did so in six years.
- Bachelor's degree attainment rates for African Americans in Tennessee were less than that of whites (23 percent vs. 40 percent).
- Overall, the completion rate at two-year institutions (i.e. successfully earning an associate's degree) was 15 percent.
- Seven percent of those who graduated from two-year institutions did so in two years and another 8 percent did so in three years.
- As with four-year institutions, African American graduation rates in two-year institutions lag behind that of white rates (7 percent vs. 17 percent).

What Works?

If higher education is to address the issue of college persistence and attainment, institutions must develop their programs and practices to meet the special needs of low-income and minority students and those who enter college in the nontraditional fashion.

Clewell and Ficklen (1986) indicated that the elements of a successful retention program include: explicit university policy, a high level of institutional commitment, a substantial institutionalization of the program, comprehensive services, dedicated staff, systematic collection of data, monitoring and follow-up, strong faculty support, and nonstigmatization of participants.

The institutional case studies below illustrate all or some of these aforementioned components.

MOUNT SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE—DOHENY CAMPUS

Mount Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles is a small Catholic women's liberal arts college. The institution's main campus is in West Los Angeles (i.e. the Chalon campus) and houses the baccalaureate degree program.

In 1962, Mount Saint Mary's opened a two-year program in downtown Los Angeles, which is the Doheny Campus. This campus has been extremely successful in enrolling and graduating minority women. Many of the young women who enter the associate degree program are first generation college attendees, and considered "high-risk" students. Many of these students have had poor or less than adequate academic preparation in high school, or are immigrants with English language difficulties. The principal criterion for admission to the Associate of Arts degree program at Mount Saint Mary's College is for students to demonstrate the potential for success.

The college specializes in educating students who have high school grade point averages and SAT scores that are below the cut-offs of many colleges: the average high school GPA for entering freshmen is 2.5 and average composite SAT score is 662. The demographic profile of the college is two hundred young women with approximately 10 percent Asian, 17 percent African American, 63 percent Hispanic and 10 percent white.

Sixty-seven percent of the young women who entered this program in fall 1987 either completed their associate of arts degree or transferred to the Chalon campus where the baccalaureate degree program is housed.

In 1989, Mount Saint Mary's College conducted a study to assess their two-year associate program and to develop a model which describes and explains the program. The key finding of the study was that:

The most important component of the Mount Saint Mary's College program at the Doheny campus is the strong commitment of the entire institutional community to the successful education of minority women.

The strategies used in the minority advancement program at Mount Saint Mary's College include:

SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS CLIMATE

- Both students and faculty considered the warm and caring campus climate which encourages studying and learning the most important factor contributing to student persistence and success.
- The campus climate is characterized as warm, trusting and generally caring. There is an active concern for student's needs which involves affirming each student's talents, abilities and skills. Counseling services are provided to assist each student in developing a strong sense of self.

ADEQUATE ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICE

- Financial aid and the assistance of the Admission's office are other major factors in recruiting students.
- The academic support services include diagnostic testing and placement, which identifies each student's strengths and weaknesses. Students are also given reliable academic advisement which is closely monitored.

GENERAL STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Students are provided with an extensive network of support services including support and understanding for the varying multicultural perspectives on campus. Career services are also provided.

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Wayne State University which in 1956 came under state control has achieved excellent local education participation rates. This is due in part to the location of the institution, its links with public schools, and its long-standing commitment to providing educational opportunities to a diverse student body.

Wayne State is an urban institution geared toward students who are employed. Twenty-five percent of the total curriculum and 30 percent of undergraduate courses are offered in the late afternoon and evening. Only about half of the students attend full-time.

Regular admission to WSU requires a 2.75 high school GPA. The majority of students are admitted on this criterion. Wayne State University also utilizes a bridge program in order to close the educational gap for students who do not meet the institution's criteria. These programs include extended classes covering required material, tutoring, learning laboratories, collaborative study and intrusive counseling. These programs are geared to those students who might be particularly vulnerable to academic failure.

WSU offers an outreach program for students ineligible for regular admission. Once students complete 24 to 30 credits in special format classes, they may transfer to other colleges within the institution through the Project 350 program. The program supports these students for three years with summer bridge programs, skills instruction and tutoring. It is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of these students graduate from a postsecondary institution. This graduation rate exceeds that of many regularly admitted students at WSU and urban universities.

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Kingsborough Community College (KCC) is located in Brooklyn, New York. The New Start program was initiated in 1985; it is designed to assist students facing dismissal at four-year institutions and to give them a second chance.

After referral by a four-year institution, students who enroll in the program are admitted to KCC in good academic standing and are permitted to apply up to 30 previously earned credits toward an associate's degree. In addition, the students are assigned a counselor to assist them with academic transfer, career and personal concerns, and make appropriate referrals to on-and off-campus support services.

A total of 1560 students from eleven colleges participated in New Start during its first six years with enrollments increasing from 51 in fall 1985 to 610 in spring 1991. Most enrollment was concentrated in the fields of Liberal Arts, Business Administration, and Accounting. By the end of spring 1991, approximately 25 percent of all New Start students had graduated from KCC or transferred to four year- institutions; 46 percent were planning to continue at KCC after spring 1991. All of the New Start graduates who applied to four-year institutions were accepted by at least one of the colleges of their choice.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Students who enter college right after high school and attend four year colleges are the most likely candidates to graduate. Yet higher education since the 1960s has changed dramatically: the college student of today and those of the future — based on demographic trends — are not likely to follow the traditional pattern. If institutions hope to enroll, retain and assist these students in attaining their educational goals, they must be more effective in addressing the particular needs of these groups.

The analysis of college going behavior of 1980 high school graduates illustrates the need for institutions to answer several key questions related to the the low attainment rates for minorities, students from low-income backgrounds, and for those who did not attend college in the traditional manner.

- Is our society willing to take the risks of future bipolarization on the basis of race and socioeconomic factors?
- What role can colleges play in addressing the needs of minority youth in college?
- What role will a multicultural curriculum play in addressing these problems?
- What mechanisms can institutions develop to increase the likelihood of educational goal attainment for non-traditional entry students?

Attainment Differences by SES Background:

We also know from the data that many high ability low-income students are not completing their education. This leads to several questions.

- Are student aid monies reaching those most in need?
- How can institutions and low-income families creatively address the problem associated with financing their college education?
- What other mechanisms can institutions utilize to address the needs of the economically disadvantaged?

The fact that fewer minorities are attaining degrees, coupled with the fact that the vast majority are beginning their postsecondary education at less than four-year institutions, are two issues that higher education must address. Related questions which need to be considered are:

- What strategies can be developed by two- and four-year institutions to increase transfers?
- What types of programs will assist students in attaining their educational goals at two-year institutions?

Only after we answer these questions and more institutions develop strategies to address these issues can higher education begin to increase the educational attainment of those who enter college in the nontraditional pattern. Yet, it is exactly these individuals who appear to be an ever-increasing component of the college-going population.

END NOTES

1. The High School and Beyond Survey (HS&B) is a national longitudinal study of 1980 high school seniors and sophomores. The data base was developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. Base year information was collected on 28,000 high school seniors in 1980 and includes follow-up surveys of nearly 12,000 in 1982, 1984 and 1986. This paper presents data supplied by 1980 high school graduates in the second and third follow-ups which were conducted in 1984 and 1986.

   The HS&B data base is a single source of information on the generation of college students in the 1980s and is probably the most complete national data base available. The HS&B allows one to analyze the overall patterns of college attendance and completion for a national sample of students.

RESOURCES

The National Center for Academic Achievement and Transfer, a program of the American Council on Education, works to examine, strengthen and enhance student transfers between community colleges and four-year institutions. The center coordinates a range of programs, including grants to cooperating two-and four-year institutions, transfer policy development, research on transfer and assistance to nationally based associations to strengthen transfer. For further information call (202) 939-9715.

The High School and Beyond Survey (HS&B) was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The HS&B survey provides information on the academic characteristics of 1980 high school sophomores and seniors, as well as their educational experiences, labor market activities and social development (e.g. family formation). The survey allows one to monitor the various behaviors of this cohort during various periods of their lives. In addition, it allows one to analyze the overall patterns of college completion for a national sample of students. For further information call C. Dennis Carroll/Paula Knepper at (202) 219-1448.

The National Association for Independent Colleges and Universities conducted a special analysis of HS&B survey data in 1989. A report, "Undergraduate Completion and Persistence at Four-Year Colleges and Universities: Completers, Persisters, Stopouts and Dropouts," describes the persistence behavior of undergraduate students, with an emphasis on similarities and differences between public and independent institutions. For further information call Oscar Porter (202) 347-7512.

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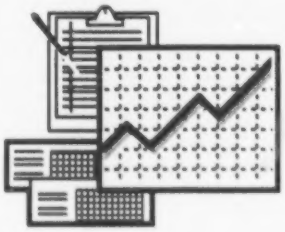

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